

England. — Churches etc. — Baptists
— Western Association.

C. Evans

T H E

Elders, Ministers & Messengers

OF THE SEVERAL

BAPTIST CHURCHES,

MEETING AT

Exon,	Croscob,	Grittleton and
Tiverton,	Crockerton,	Malsbury,
Prescott,	Sarum,	Wotton,
Wellington,	Bratton,	Sodbury,
Loughwood,	Melksham,	Paulton,
Bridgwater,	Calne,	Broadmead and
Yeovil,	Cheltenham,	Pithay, Bristol.
Frome,	Horsley,	

Having received LETTERS also from

Chacewater,	Upottery,	Stokegomer,
Plymouth,	Cullumpton,	Chard,
Kingsbridge,	Lyme,	Horsington, and
Bampton,	Bicknell,	Bradford.

Being met in association at the Pithay, Bristol,
June 5 and 6, 1781. To the several churches
they represent send Christian Salutation.

DEAR BRETHREN,

WE are happy in the opportunity once more
given us of addressing you in this our social
capacity, and especially that we have it in our power,
even in these dark and gloomy times, to communi-
cate

cate to you tidings of great joy. We can not only inform you, that we have once more been permitted peaceably and comfortably to assemble together, and have enjoyed, as we would humbly hope, some tokens of the divine presence in the various religious services in which we have engaged, but that from some, though not many of the churches, we have received pleasing accounts of considerable additions; and that in all of them, as far as we can learn, peace prevails, that invaluable blessing, and there appears to be a genuine concern for the advancement of truth and holiness. But this is not all. We have received by favor of one of our aged and honored brethren in London, the Rev. Mr. Wallin, that which has been refreshing to us as cold waters to a thirsty soul, even good news from a far country. Amidst all the horrors of war which have so long prevailed and spread their baneful influence over the American Continent, it is with unutterable pleasure we learn that the Prince of Peace has taken to himself his mighty power, erected his banners of love, and subdued multitudes to the obedience of his gospel, which, accompanied with his Almighty power, has been made indeed to run and been greatly glorified. By the account transmitted to our honored brother abovementioned, from a worthy minister in the province of New-England, it appears, that in no very large district more than eight hundred souls have been added to different churches within the space of little more than a year, and that the work is still going on with rapidity and increasing success. The substance of the account is as follows.

“ In

“ In August, 1778, I perceived a little beginning of conviction upon a few minds in our society, which gradually increased, so as to add *twenty-two* very agreeable members to our church, and many more are soon expected. Brother Wincheller, who was born in the year, 1751, seven Miles west of Boston, is now owned of God in an astonishing manner. He began to preach fourteen days after Mr. Whitfield's death, and after laboring a few years in these parts, he went to South-Carolina; since which he has had two terrible fits of illness himself, and has buried three wives and several children, and for fifteen months past has had neither wife nor child upon earth. A year ago he had concluded to return again to his native country, but a revival of religion at Welch-Neck on Pedee river, where he was preaching, prevented it, and from May 30, to August 29, (1780, as I apprehend it,) he baptized 239 persons there: One hundred of whom were negroe slaves, who were before in a state of heathenism, and averse to attending christian worship: but before he came away, he informed me that it was usual to see five or six hundred of these poor creatures at meeting, and the work prevailed when he came away the first of September. On November the 16th, he called to see me, on his return to his father's, and expressed a strong faith of seeing glorious things in our parts, since which I suppose he has preached about as many sermons as there have been days, notwithstanding a very severe winter. Many of our ministers have been greatly quickened, and the effects have been such, that about one hundred persons have been baptized in Rehoboth, seventy in Swansea, forty in Taunton and Baynham adjacent

adjacent to me, and many in neighbouring towns. A very remarkable work is begun in Newton and Brookline by Mr. Winchester's means, though among his own kindred and acquaintance. I have preached there this week, and was delighted with what I saw. Distinct from these instruments a glorious work began last summer in the western part of our government. There, elder Peter Warden of New Providence, and elder Nathan Mason of Panesborough, baptized 300 betwixt May and January; and in the same space elder Coddington of Brimfield above 80, and through New-England there is now the greatest prospect of a general and thorough reformation that has ever appeared for these thirty-five years past, and in some respects greater than ever I saw before; notwithstanding the torrent of corruption seemed lately as if it would have drowned the land, which often makes me think of those words, *Isai. lix. 19.* "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. O help us to praise and pray!"

How pleasing, how sweet these tidings are, and how encouraging and animating!

"Great things O everlasting Son,
Great things indeed thy grace has done!"

And is the Lord's hand shortened that he cannot still thus go on to save, go on conquering, and to conquer? Or may we not hope that we shall see yet greater things than these, and that what has been done

done

done is but an earnest of that which the Lord designs to do. Let us then Brethren, amidst all the darkness which surrounds us, particularly with respect to the state of our public affairs, and the turnings and overturnings which have been and may yet be; let us amidst all shout with the blessed above, and cry with raptures of joy, Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! He sitteth King upon the floods, and stilleth the wildest tumults of the people—causing the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of it he can restrain: carrying on his own wise and eternal purposes, amidst scenes of confusion, horror and blood, till all the kingdoms of the earth shall at length become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet, and God shall be all in all! May these blessed times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, not only be continued to our brethren of every denomination abroad, but be extended also to us, that the wilderness and the solitary places in this island may be glad, and our deserts rejoice and blossom as the rose, that the parched ground in the midst of us may become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. The promises which relate to the extension of the gospel, and the glory of the latter day, are great and glorious: May we embrace, realize and rejoice in them!

But whilst we are thus happy in communicating to you such joyful tidings, we must not omit to inform you, that we have also been called to the exercise of sorrow and lamentation. The continuance of the present

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sent unhappy war which has extended itself from year to year wider and wider, and seems to banish every hope of returning peace, is a calamity which however lightly thought of by many, appears to us of the most threatening nature, and we must own fills us with the most gloomy apprehensions. We are also deeply affected with that spread of infidelity and all manner of wickedness which so dreadfully characterises the present day, and cannot but lament in a very particular manner, that open and scandalous profanation of the sabbath, which has of late more than ever prevailed, and which is as opposite to every principle of sound policy as of true piety. It adds much to our concern, that whilst iniquity thus abounds in the world, lukewarmness hath seized the church, and the love of many amongst the professing people of God themselves waxes cold. There seems to be in many of our associating churches, little appearance from year to year of the presence and power of God, little of a work of conviction and conversion, little zeal, little earnestness about the things of God, but all seek their own things, very few indeed the things of Christ. The few amongst us that did, we have reason to fear, have been rendered by death this last year, fewer. Not only have many been removed by death this year, but many that promised great and extensive usefulness in their day and generation. And we have been called further mournfully to adopt the language of the prophet, and to say with him, "Our fathers where are they, and the prophets, do they live for ever?"

"The

“ The almighty arm of conquering death
 Does God's own house invade :
 Behold the prophet and the priest
 Lie number'd with the dead.”

Since our last annual assembly as you have pathetically noticed in your several letters, it hath pleased God to remove from us our honored brother, (many of us can say our venerable Father,) who then so pathetically addressed us. His presence, which has so often, through a course of more than forty, yea almost fifty years graced and enlivened these our annual meetings, we shall enjoy on earth no more. He is joined to a nobler assembly, and will no more come back to us—God grant we may, in due time, go to him ! Many of you we doubt not will recollect with mournful pleasure, the many ardent prayers he hath offered up to heaven on these occasions, and the many awful discourses, which with a heaven taught eloquence he hath addressed to us ! His last discourse was peculiarly solemn and affecting. He spoke as one that knew, on such an occasion, “ he ne'er should speak again, and as a dying man to dying men.” Be not deceived, (this was the awful subject,) God is not mocked. May we never forget his solemn dying admonitions ! But may ministers, professors, and hearers of the word in general, who were all pathetically addressed by our departed Friend and Brother upon that awful occasion, in this his final farewell discourse to us, receive the word of exhortation, and take heed that we be not deceived, knowing that God is not, cannot, will not be mocked. Happy would it be for us all, ministers and people, were we daily to realize the awful thought, and to live and
 act

act in the habitual view of that day, when we shall all appear before this God, who searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men : the scrutiny of whose all-seeing eye we cannot avoid, and from whose decisive sentence we cannot flee.

We wish you dear brethren, constantly to remember that religion is more than a mere name, that it is a reality, a substantial, a divine reality, and that though it is a privilege to have a name to live, it will only aggravate our condemnation, should we at last be found dead. What is the chaff to the wheat? We wish you ever to prize the glorious doctrines of the gospel, the unsearchable riches of Christ, to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and to hold fast the form of sound words contained in the oracles of truth and inspiration. But if you would derive saving benefit from these precious doctrines of the gospel, or effectually recommend them to those around you, remember something more is necessary than a mere notional acquaintance with them, or a violent opposition of all those who appear to us to oppose them ; you must experience their salutary transforming power in your own hearts and lives. Now this we wish brethren, above all things, that the kingdom of God may come to you, not in word only, but in power. That your hearts may be cheered by it, your consciences relieved, your sins subdued, your tempers improved, your whole souls sanctified. That you may not think it enough to say, Lord, Lord, and to boast of your certain interest in his salvation, at the same time that your tempers and lives contradict your vain assertions, and it may
be

be justly said to you, in the language of the prophet, "The word of the Lord is against thee:" But we wish to have you exemplify the power and excellency of the gospel by the genuine fruits of faith, love, and zealous, uniform, persevering obedience. That it may not be reproachfully said to you, "What do ye more than others," but that those who converse with you may take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus and learnt of him.

We are grieved to find so great a backwardness amongst professors in general, to attend preparatory meetings and other seasons of prayer and religious improvement; and that so few appear to attend in good earnest to family religion, and the catechising of their children, and religious instruction of their servants. Religion must be minded, it must be attended to, if ever we expect to prosper and make any progress in it. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you, but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you, visiting your transgressions with a rod, and your iniquity with stripes, though his loving kindness he will not utterly take away from you.

Is it not high time to awake out of sleep? Your ministers you see die, as well as others, and you that have heard the word dispensed by them must die also. In the list of the dead the next year, many of you that are now amongst the living, will no doubt be found. Some of you that are perhaps at present in the full vigour of sprightly youth and blooming health may be of this number. And will you slumber on the brink of the grave, will you be lukewarm on the verge

verge of eternity, will you trifle in the view of that day when you shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and hope to meet your ministers and fellow professors, and to go to heaven and be happy with them, and with all the redeemed for ever and ever? God forbid! Let us rather hope that encompassed as you are with so great a cloud of witnesses, both in heaven and earth, you will be enabled to lay aside every weight, and to run with patience the race set before you, looking unto Jesus, and ever trusting in him, who though his dearest servants die, for ever lives, and is the same yesterday to-day, and for ever. Thus would we willingly impart to you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye are dear unto us. For what is our hope, and joy, and crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? That we may then meet you with joy and not with grief, and have an abundant entrance administered to us, together with you, into the everlasting kingdom and glory of our divine and dear Redeemer, is the most earnest affectionate prayer of

Your faithful and affectionate brethren,

Bristol, June 6, }
1781. *}*

ROBERT DAY.

Sign'd by order of }
the assembly, and on }
their behalf, by the }
Moderator.

B R E V I A T E S.

TUESDAY afternoon at three o'clock precisely, the Association was opened in prayer by our brother *Sotteridge*, our brother *Day* was chosen Moderator, the letters from the churches were read, minutes taken, and our brother *C. Evans* desired to draw up the general letter. The service was closed in prayer by our brother *Phillips*.

WEDNESDAY morning at six met for prayer, when our brethren *Pyne*, *Allsop*, *S. Dunscomb*, and *Taylor*, improved time in that duty.

Met again at ten, when our brethren *E. Francis*, and *J. Gillard*, engaged in prayer, brother *Day* preached from 2 Tim. 4. 5. *But watch thou in all things*. And having sung at the usual intervals, the service was closed in prayer by our brother *Sprague*.

At three met again, when our brother *Francis* began in prayer, and our brother *Kingdon* preached from 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20. *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are Gods*. At the close of the sermon the general letter was read. Sang at the usual intervals, and closed the public service in prayer by our brother *Clarke*.

Attended to the private business of the Association. Approved the letter, and desired the Moderator to sign

sign it on behalf of the assembly. Audited and approved the accounts relative to the association fund, and desired the Moderator to attest them accordingly. Voted various sums out of this fund, for village preaching and other useful and important purposes.

Appointed days of humiliation and prayer as usual, on account of the languid state of the church, and the divided state of the nation.

Agreed, To hold the next association at Sarum, Wednesday and Thursday in the Whitsun week. To begin Wednesday afternoon at three o'clock precisely. Our brethren Messrs. *Thomas* and *Evans*, of Bristol, to preach the sermons. The Moderator then concluded in prayer.

In the associated Churches the last year, there were

Baptized	.	61
Received by letter	-	8
		69
Dead	-	53
Dismissed to other Churches		4
Excluded	-	5
		62
Increase		7

A copy of the EPITAPH on the grave-stone of
our aged Brother Hann, who lies interred in the
Meeting-house at LOUGHWOOD, in the county of
Dorset, it is presumed will not be unacceptable to the
churches addressed in this letter, and is therefore
presented to them on this blank leaf as follows,

IN MEMORY OF
THE REV. ISAAC HANN,
AN OLD DISCIPLE,
AND A TRULY ABLE, EMINENT, AND FAITHFUL
MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST.
HE WAS FOR MANY YEARS
THE WORTHY PASTOR OF THIS CHURCH,
AND UNIVERSALLY RESPECTED
BY ALL THE CHURCHES
IN THE CIRCLE OF HIS EXTENSIVE ACQUAINTANCE,
TO WHOM HIS FREQUENT VISITS
AND MINISTERIAL SERVICES
ON PUBLIC AS WELL AS PRIVATE OCCASIONS
WERE HIGHLY ACCEPTABLE.

He died in peace the 17th day of *March*, 1778,
in the 89th year of his age.

Wit sparkled in his pleasing face,
With zeal his heart was fir'd;
Few ministers so humble were
Yet few so much admir'd.

Ripen'd

Ripen'd for heaven by grace divine
 Like autumn fruit he fell,
 Reader, think not to live so long,
 But seek to live as well.

This grave stone and inscription were placed here by the order, and at the expence of the Baptist Western Association, as a token of sincere respect to the memory of their ancient and honored Brother, whom God had so eminently distinguished by the endowments of nature and the gifts of grace.

The memory of the Just is blessed.

Prov. x. 7.

The following publications may be had by applying
to the Secretary of this Association.

THEODOSIA'S POEMS, 3 vols. adorned with elegant
frontispieces, and handsomely bound in calf and let-
tered, Price ros. 6d.

☞ Those who take six Sets, will be allowed a seventh gratis.
The third vol. may be had separate, Price gs. 6d.

THE RESOLUTE SAINT, a Sermon on *Job 13.* 15.
By J. Haydon. Price 6d.

N. B. The above publications are appropriated to the benefit of
The Bristol Education Society.

A new edition of Wilson's Scripture Manual,
7s. 6d. per hundred.

The Baptist Catechism with proofs, 15s. per hun-
dred.

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in canvas, 1s. 3d. in sheep, 1s. 6d. calf.

The New Collection of Hymns, 3s. in sheep,
3s. 6d. calf.

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In the Press, and speedily will be published,
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Help to Zion's Travellers, being an attempt to
remove various stumbling blocks out of the way, re-
lating to doctrinal, experimental, and practical reli-
gion. By Robert Hall.

Just published,

Price SIX-PENCE,

ELISHA'S EXCLAMATION,

A SERMON occasioned by the Death of
The Rev. H. EVANS, M. A.

Who departed this Life March 28, 1781,

In the 69th Year of his Age.

By CALEB EVANS, M. A.

Multis ille bonis flebilis eccidit

Nulli flebilior quam mihi !—

Quando ullum invenient parem ?

An ELEGY, on the same Occasion.

By B. FRANCIS.

THE HOPE, JOY AND CROWN OF A FAITHFUL
MINISTER,

A Sermon preached at Broadmead, Bristol, May 6, 1781.

By C. EVANS, M. A.

Speedily will be published, Price 2s.

A PRINT of the late Rev. H. Evans, M. A.

Taken from an original Painting.

Those who wish to have some of the first Impression of the above
Print are desired to send their Names as soon as convenient to
C. EVANS, Bristol.

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